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When superhumanity needs a detective agency, they call upon Madrox the Multiple Man and his mutant team of investigators...

X-FACTOR

WHAT HAPPENED LAST ISSUE:

The trail for the vanished Invisible Woman has led all of X-Factor (except for Strong Guy, who was accidentally left behind) to Latveria. Monet, the Thing and Shatterstar are leading an ill-advised direct attack upon Doom's castle, while Madrox, Rictor and Darwin conduct an investigation that leads them to a lonely grave, buried at the bottom of which appears to be...Reed Richards? Meanwhile, Franklin and Valeria, son and daughter of Reed and Sue Richards, have overheard what seems to be an evil duplicate of their father having a conversation with Doctor Doom that seems to indicate they're in cahoots, prompting the children to flee their home with Reed in pursuit...

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X-FACTOR (ISSN #1932-5266) **No. 201, March, 2010**. Published Monthly by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. **APPLICATION TO MAIL PERIODICAL POSTAGE RATES IS PENDING AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.**

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$2.99 per copy in the U.S. (GST #R127032852) in the direct market and $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $3.99 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand. Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** Subscription rate (U.S. dollars) for 12 issues: U.S. $27.00; Canada $37.00; Foreign $39.00. **POSTMASTER: SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO X-FACTOR, C/O MARVEL SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 5187 BRENTWOOD, TN 37024. TELEPHONE # (800) 217-9158. FAX # (615) 377-0525. subscriptions@marvel.com.** ALAN FINE, CEO Marvel Publishing Division and EVP & CMO Marvel Characters B.V.; DAN BUCKLEY, Chief Executive Officer and Publisher - Print, Animation & Digital Media; JIM SOKOLOWSKI, Chief Operating Officer; DAVID GABRIEL, SVP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; DAVID BOGART, SVP of Business Affairs & Talent Management; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP of Merchandising & Communications; JIM O'KEEFE, VP of Operations & Logistics; DAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN F. GABRIE, Director of Publishing & Editorial Operations; SUSAN CRESPI, Editorial Operations Manager; ALEX MORALES, Publishing Operations Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Ron Stern, VP of Business Development, at rstern@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

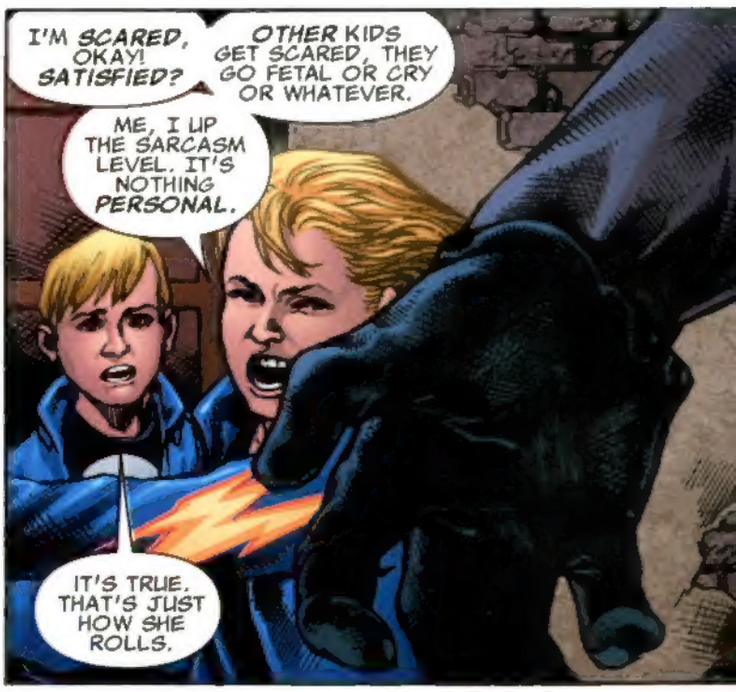
DOING THE RIGHT THING. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS, YOU'D THINK IT WOULD BE EASY.
THE GOOD GUYS HELP OTHERS; THE BAD GUYS HURT OTHERS.
WASSUP, REED?
IT'S NOTHING, BEN. IT'S...WELL, IT'S VICTOR. I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM.
YA MEAN VON DOOM? WHY, FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD?
OH, HE'S TESTING SOME SORT OF DEVICE DESIGNED TO LET HIM SEE INTO THE NETHERWORLD. AND I THINK HE MADE SOME MISTAKES IN KEY CALCULATIONS.
THE "NETHERWORLD." SOUNDS PRETTY...
I KNOW, BEN: FANTASTIC.
FORE!
WHAT TH' HELL WAS THAT?!?!
BOOM!
SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHIN' BLEW UP NEARBY!
REED? YOU OKAY?!?!
MY FACE! MY--!

YER FACE IS FINE! NOT A GORGEOUS MUG LIKE MINE, BUT STILL--
THEORETICALLY, IT SHOULD BE JUST THAT CLEAR CUT.
C'MON, LET'S SEE WHAT THAT NOISE WAS. MEBBE WE CAN HELP.
I MEAN, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO JUST LOOK AT A BAD GUY AND SAY, "YEAH, HE'S EVIL."
REED? YA COMIN--?
BUT IT'S NOT THAT EASY.
THE BAD GUYS DON'T ALWAYS LOOK EVIL. YOU HAVE TO JUDGE THEM BY THEIR DEEDS...
KRAK
...AND BY THEN, IT CAN BE WAY TOO LATE.
IDIOT! FALL BEFORE THE MIGHT OF--

DOOM... IN A PARALLEL DIMENSION...JUMPED INTO THAT DIMENSION'S REED RICHARDS AND KILLED BEN GRIMM BACK IN THEIR COLLEGE DAYS? AND NOW THAT DOC DOOM...
Jumped over to this dimension, yes. He told me his life's story while he was busy interring me...
...and I doubt he was dissembling. He said he wanted me to know...
...so that while I struggled to survive with the rebreather he'd "generously" left me for air, my suffering would be more intense.
SO HE WAS MONOLOGING.
MADROX, I'M ONE OF THE SMARTEST MEN ON THE PLANET...
...AND EVEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU HALF THE TIME.
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER TO BE INSULTED OR FLATTERED BY THAT.
HE GOT THE DROP ON ME IN MY LAB. ALL THE SECURITY DEVICES IN THE WORLD CAN'T KEEP OUT SOMEONE WHO'S BASICALLY ME.
FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION? SERIOUSLY?
WE WERE VIRTUALLY INVADED BY ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF OURSELVES A FEW MONTHS BACK. WE THOUGHT THEY WERE ALL GONE.
IT APPEARS YOU MISSED ONE.
I DON'T GET IT. IF HE KILLED THAT WORLD'S BEN GRIMM...THEN WHO FLEW THE ROCKET THAT RESULTED IN THE FF?
HOW DID HE STILL WIND UP AS "MR. FANTASTIC"?
"OBVIOUSLY UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, RICTOR, BUT APPARENTLY COSMIC RAYS WERE IN MY FUTURE, NO MATTER WHAT.
"HOWEVER IT HAPPENED, IT DID, AND MY FAMILY REMAINS AT RISK."

SLOW DOWN, WOULD'JA, SO I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT'CHER TALKING ABOUT.
I'M NOT SURE I CAN SPEAK THAT SLOWLY.

Y'KNOW WHAT, KID? Y'GOT A LOTTA LIP FOR SOMEONE WHO CAME FLYIN' HERE IN HER PJ'S LOOKIN' FER ME TO BAIL 'ER OUT!
WE WERE LOOKING FOR THE WHOLE TEAM, ACTUALLY.
WELL, I'M WHO'S HERE, OKAY? SO IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT--
VAL, PLEASE!

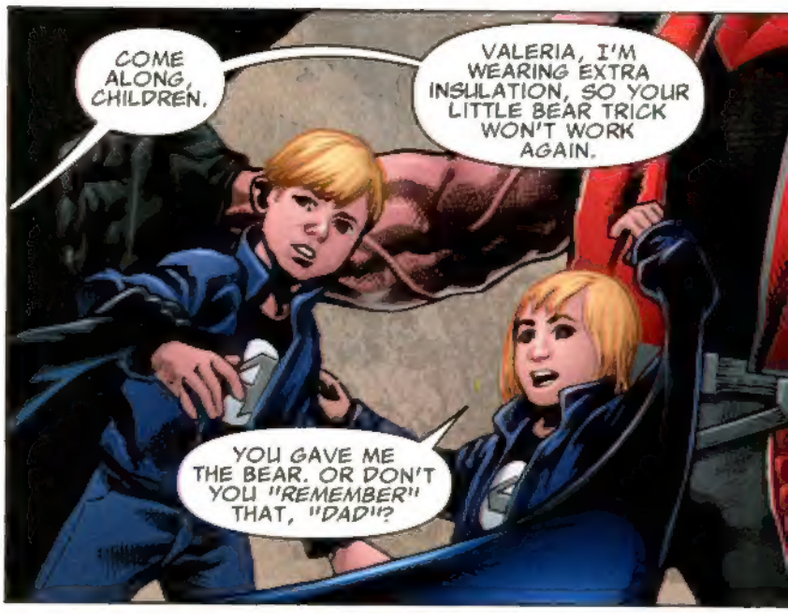

I'M SCARED, OKAY! SATISFIED?
OTHER KIDS GET SCARED, THEY GO FETAL OR CRY OR WHATEVER.
ME, I UP THE SARCASM LEVEL. IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL.
IT'S TRUE. THAT'S JUST HOW SHE ROLLS.

OKAY, SO... LEMME SEE IF I GOT THIS:
YER DAD'S GUNNIN' FOR YA 'CAUSE HE AIN'T YOUR DAD--
VALERIA OVERHEARD HIM TALKING TO DOCTOR DOOM LIKE THEY'RE OLD FRIENDS.

I FIGURE EITHER HE'S A SKRULL...
...OR A CLONE, OR POSSIBLY AN INTERDIMENSIONAL DUPLICATE.
AW, GOD, NOT AGAIN.
EVEN BETTER.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU, "STRONG GUY"...

BUT I'M HERE TO COLLECT THEM. SORRY FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE.
CHILDREN, YOU'RE IN A LOT OF TROUBLE.
HOW'D YA KNOW--?
WHERE THEY WERE? I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF PUTTING TRACKERS IN THEIR FLIGHT JACKETS.


COME ALONG, CHILDREN.
VALERIA, I'M WEARING EXTRA INSULATION, SO YOUR LITTLE BEAR TRICK WON'T WORK AGAIN.
YOU GAVE ME THE BEAR. OR DON'T YOU "REMEMBER" THAT, "DAD"?

LOOK, REED, THE KIDS ARE OBVIOUSLY SCARED--
THAT'S WHAT PARENTS ARE FOR, STRONG GUY. TO MAKE THE WORLD LESS SCARY.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

I THINK MEBBE WE SHOULD WAIT 'TIL EVERYBODY ELSE GETS BACK. SEE, THEY--

NO.
UNHHHHHH!!!

"I NEED TO GET BACK... MY WIFE, MY CHILDREN, THE DANGER THEY'RE IN--"
"IF YOUR KIDS NEED HELP, REED, THEY KNOW WHO TO COME TO. AS FOR SUE, THAT'S WHY WE CAME."

YOU'RE SAYING SHE'S *HERE*? IN *LATVERIA*?
THAT'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN LED TO *BELIEVE*.
VON DOOM. WE HAVE TO GO TO HIS CASTLE. NOTHING HAPPENS IN LATVERIA WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE.
SOME OF MY PEOPLE ARE ATTACKING THAT PROBLEM.
"ATTACKING"? YOU'RE NOT SAYING--
THEY'RE GOING IN GUNS BLAZING, YES.
WELL, NOT "GUNS," EXACTLY.
YEAH, ONE OF 'EM HAS SWORDS.
ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE COMPLETELY INEXPERIENCED WITH VON DOOM WOULD THINK THAT A FRONTAL ATTACK WAS *REMOTELY* ADVISABLE.
ONE OF THEM WAS THE THING.
ONLY INEXPERIENCED PEOPLE OTHER THAN BEN WOULD THINK THAT A FRONTAL ATTACK WAS *REMOTELY* ADVISABLE.
LET'S GO.
HUH? WAIT!
THERE'S NO *TIME* TO WAIT.
NOT IF YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR FRIENDS ALIVE.

IT'S EASIER WHEN PEOPLE ARE FACED WITH NATURAL DISASTER. "GOOD" OR "BAD" ISN'T AN ISSUE; IT'S ALL ABOUT SELF-DEFENSE.
PEOPLE UNDERSTAND SELF-DEFENSE. IT'S PRIMAL. IT'S PART OF BEING HUMAN.
AND MACHINES. THERE'S NO GRAY AREAS IN TRASHING MACHINES...
...SUCH AS, FOR INSTANCE, DOC DOOM'S WARRIOR ROBOTS.

REMIND ME WHY WE DIDN'T SIMPLY STAY AIRBORNE IN OUR APPROACH?
CUZ I FIGGERED HE'D SEE US COMIN' A MILE AWAY AND JUST SHOOT US DOWN.
AND SO APPROACHING ON FOOT WAS... BETTER SOMEHOW?
YEAH, WELL...WORKED IN THEORY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. THE MOOD I'M IN...
...MORE THINGS TO HIT ARE EXACTLY WHAT I NEED.

YOUR FRIENDS FIGHT WELL, AND WITH *MUCH* ENTHUSIASM.
YOU COULD BE PUTTING UP MORE OF A DEFENSE, THOUGH.
OF COURSE.
BUT IN THIS MANNER, MY TECHNOLOGY IS ABLE TO ANALYZE THEIR COMBAT STYLE...
THUS ***SIMPLIFYING*** MATTERS IF I SHOULD DECIDE TO PRODUCE ROBOT DUPLICATES OF THEM FOR INFILTRATION PURPOSES.
YOU'RE ALWAYS THINKING AHEAD.
YES, WELL...
HAVING YOU HERE HAS HONED MY ABILITY IN THAT REGARD.
YES, WELL...
IT'S BEEN A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION.
JUST SO.

HEY! SMART GUY!
HAPPY, CHILDREN? YOU'RE INCONVENIENCING LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS.
WHAT'S THE ENDGAME, HUH? THE EVIL PLAN?
PLAN?
MOVE THE PARADE FLOAT!
DAX TAURUS
I'M REED RICHARDS. ADMIRED BY BILLIONS. TRUSTED BY THE HIGHEST PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT.
I HAVE A BEAUTIFUL WIFE AND LOVING FAMILY.
WHAT MORE PLAN DOES ANYONE REQUIRE THAN THAT?
HOW ABOUT A MEDICAL PLAN, 'CAUSE, BROTHER--
--YOU'RE GONNA NEED IT!

KIDS! FLY OUTTA HERE! THE GROWN-UPS HAVE TO HAVE A PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE!
YOU ARE HARDLY THEIR TEACHER...
AND YOU AIN'T THEIR DAD, BUT I FIGGER AT LEAST I CAN TEACH YA A LESSON YOU'LL NEVER FORGET!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE IN A POSITION TO TEACH ME ANYTH--
HEY! YOU MEWLING BRATS! GET BACK WITH THAT--
NEED A RIDE, HOTSHOT?!
YOU SUPER TYPES, ALWAYS BLOCKIN' TRAFFIC! I'M SICK OF IT!

INVADERS!
DOOM PROTECT US!
THE WHOLE GOOD/EVIL BLURRING PROBABLY COMES FROM THE FACT THAT THE BAD GUYS HAVE STOPPED LABELING THEMSELVES.
BROTHERHOODS OF EVIL ARE SO 1960S.
DAMNED INCONSIDERATE, IF YOU ASK ME.
SEE? WHEN THE CRAP HITS THE FAN, THE PEOPLE OF LATVERIA WANT THE BAD GUY TO SAVE THEM FROM THE GOOD GUYS.
GO FIGURE.
ARE YOU GENTLEMEN ALL RIGHT?
DEPENDS. ARE WE STILL BOUNCIN'?
NO.
THEN I'M NOT ALL RIGHT.
NOW I KNOW HOW A POKEMON FEELS. LONGSHOT--?
I'M PERFECTLY FINE.
GOD, I HATE YOU.
IT SEEMS THE OTHERS HAVE BEEN THROUGH HERE. LOOK.
THEY COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH THERE THAT EASILY.
THAT'S "EASILY"!?
HE'S RIGHT. IF DOOM WANTED THEM STOPPED, THEY'D BE STOPPED.
WE NEED TO GET THERE QUICKLY. IF SUE IS THERE, GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT SORT OF TORTURE SHE'S BEING SUBJECTED TO.

HEEE HEE HEE...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
OHHHH YEAH...
I THINK YOU'VE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK.
KING ARTHUR
YOU ALWAYS COULD SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME.
GET IT? GET IT?
YES, I GET IT.
WHY CAN'T I GET YOU OUT OF MY MIND, YOU SEXY THING?
WELL...
I AM IMPERIUS REX.
WHICH MEANS--?
IT'S AN ANAGRAM FOR "I M PUR SEXIER."
OHHHH...YOU MASTER COMPLICATOR...WHY AM I HERE? WHY AM I EVEN CONSIDERING...?
REED'S MY HUSBAND. I LOVE HIM.
BY NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT, SUSAN, HE IS NOT HERE, AND I AM. AND IF YOU CANNOT BE WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE--
LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH?
MY GOD: TWO-BIT CHAT-UP LINES FROM PRINCE NAMOR. THAT'S JUST WRONG.

HOW DARE YOU! THIS IS A PRIVATE LIAISON AND--
YEAH, HOW ABOUT YOU JUST KEEP NEPTUNE'S TRIDENT IN YOUR SHORTS THERE, HOT PANTS.
SUE, TAKE MY HAND.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
THIS IS ALL IN YOUR HEAD, COURTESY OF VON DOOM.
WE FOUND YOU, AND MY FRIENDS ARE KEEPING MORE OF HIS ROBOT GOONS AT BAY...
...WHILE I PROJECTED MY MIND IN HERE. I CAN'T SEEM TO SHUT THE MACHINE DOWN, AND WRECKING IT COULD CAUSE MENTAL FEEDBACK THAT--
YOU SPEAK MADNESS!
FLUENTLY.
SUE, YOUR HUSBAND AND KIDS ARE IN DANGER.
IF YOU DON'T SHAKE THIS OFF, THEN THERE'S NO TELLING--
LET'S GO.
SUSAN! SURELY YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO THIS--
I'LL LISTEN TO ANYONE WHO SAYS MY FAMILY'S AT RISK.

SHE'S OUT!
WHERE AM I?
DOOM'S CASTLE, INSIDE A LAB. THE GUYS ARE IN THE ANTECHAMBER TAKING ON ALL COMERS.
APPARENTLY THAT CONTRAPTION KEPT YOU IN A STATE OF--
I KNOW WHERE IT KEPT ME, AND IF YOU BREATHE ONE WORD TO REED...
I REALLY DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUR FANTASIES. I HAVE MY OWN PROBLEMS.
GOOD. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
I'VE KNOWN MY SHARE OF DANGER, THANKS.
CAREFUL.
NO, I MEAN THERE'S NO TELLING HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN LYING THERE, SO YOUR LEGS MIGHT BE KIND OF--
--WEAK.
WUMF
A LITTLE HELP?

SOMETIMES YOU'RE LEFT WONDERING IF TERMS LIKE "GOOD" AND "BAD" MEAN ANYTHING ANYMORE.
EVIL GOES UNPUNISHED AND CONTINUES TO THRIVE; GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER FOR NO REASON.
C'MON! THIS WAY!
ARE YOU SURE?
NAH. BUT WHAT I LACK IN BEIN' SURE, I MAKE UP FOR IN VOLUME!
INDEED.
A LESSER ARTIST WOULD HAVE BEEN SORELY DISTRACTED BY YOUR THUNDERING ABOUT.
FORTUNATELY I JUST FINISHED THE MOUTH AFTER WEEKS OF ENDEAVOR.
WHATEVER CHALLENGES LA GIOCONDA MAY HAVE POSED FOR DA VINCI, HE WOULD HAVE SNAPPED HIS BRUSH IN FRUSTRATION TRYING TO CAPTURE THE ENIGMATIC SMILE OF MISS MILLER.
HAVE A SEAT. JUST A FEW FINISHING TOUCHES--

I GOT A FINISHING TOUCH RIGHT HERE, YA--!
ZZZZZK
IDIOTS.
LAYLA...? IS THAT--?
HI, MONET. I REMEMBER YOU AS BEING A LOT TALLER.
I HOPE YOU LADIES WILL DISPLAY MORE WISDOM THAN YOUR ASSOCIATES... TO SAY NOTHING OF GRATITUDE.
"GRATITUDE," DOOM? FOR IMPRISONING ME--?
FOR SAVING YOU, FOOLISH WOMAN, FROM THE ATTENTIONS OF AN IMPOSTER. A DOOM FROM ANOTHER WORLD, AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING MELODRAMATIC.
THE FOOL. HE THOUGHT TO COMBINE RESOURCES WITH ME, AS IF I WAS UNAWARE HE WOULD EVENTUALLY SEEK TO BETRAY ME.
I DECIDED I WOULD ALLOW THE GAME TO RUN ITS COURSE...
BUT INSISTED THAT YOU BE REMOVED FROM THE BOARD. HIS PLANS FOR YOU WERE...
...DISTASTEFUL.
LIFE IS A CHEAP COMMODITY, BUT WE SHOULD HAVE SOME RESPECT FOR THE INTIMACIES OF MAN AND WIFE, SHOULD WE NOT?
HE'S OLD WORLD. GO FIGURE.
AND NOW THE GAME WILL CONCLUDE...

"...IN THE ONLY WAY SUCH GAMES EVER CONCLUDE, NAMELY:
"TO MY SATISFACTION."
WE HAVEN'T BEEN ATTACKED YET. IS THAT GOOD OR BAD?
THAT CERTAINLY COVERS THE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES.
WE'RE ALMOST TO THE ROOF. BE READY FOR--
HEY THERE.
COULD YOU GUYS SHAKE A LEG? WE NEED TO GET BACK IN A HURRY.
"THERE'S A FIGHT BACK IN NEW YORK THAT'S COMING TO A HEAD."
UH OH.
CHILDREN! I AM GOING TO TURN THIS CAR RIGHT AROUND!
NOT AGAIN!

AND AGAIN AND AGAIN, UNTIL YA TELL ME WHAT'S GOIN' ON!

OH, I DON'T THINK SO.
LIKE A MAN DYING OF THIRST IN THE DESERT, WITH WATER JUST BEYOND THE DUNE, OUT OF HIS REACH...
...YOU'RE GOING TO DIE KNOWING THE ANSWERS ARE RIGHT IN *FRONT* OF YOU, BUT BEYOND YOUR GRASP.

EH?

SO...THAT'S IT? WE JUST GO HOME? NO THROWDOWN? NO--
GRIMM, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO REALIZE THAT I HAVE SIMPLY OUTGROWN YOU?
BUT WHAT WAS LAYLA DOING HERE?

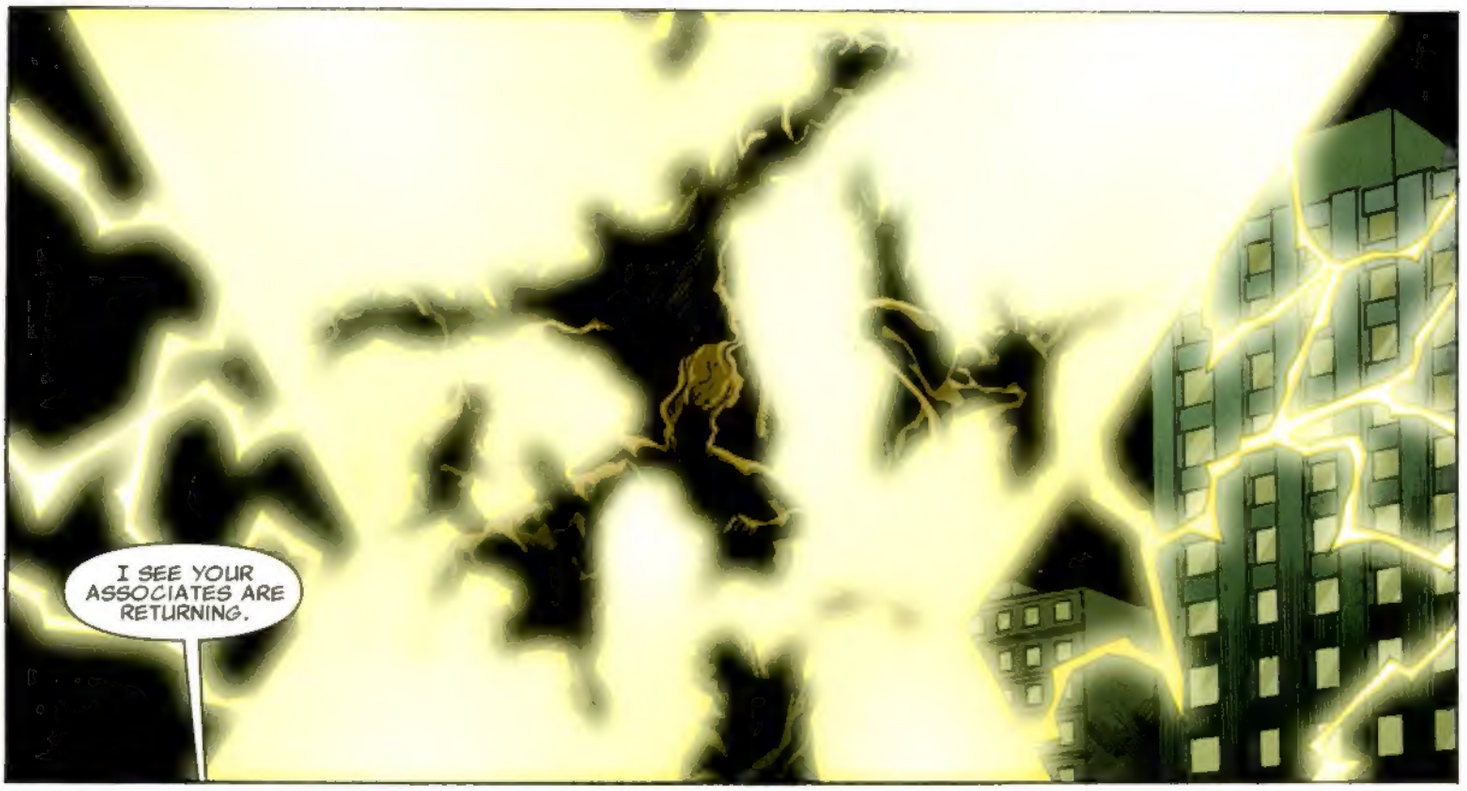
WHAT I NEEDED TO, IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THAT JAMIE AND I WERE ABLE TO COME BACK VIA DOOM'S TIME MACHINE. IN EXCHANGE FOR WHICH--
MISS MILLER SERVED ME IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY FOR THE LAST YEAR. HER FOREKNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY USEFUL.

WE'RE BRINGING DOC DOOM'S MAGIC EIGHT BALL BACK WITH US? TO BE ON OUR SIDE?
LOOKS LIKE.
PLEASE REMAIN FOCUSED ON OUR DESTINATION, RICTOR. OTHERWISE THE RESULTS COULD BE--
RIGHT. SORRY.

OKAY! EVERYBODY, GO!

FAREWELL, MISS MILLER. AND WHEN YOU ARE WILLING TO ADMIT WHERE LIES YOUR TRUE DESTINY...
I SHALL BE HERE.

GOOD HAND-IN-HAND WITH EVIL. OR IS IT?
I'M RETURNING TO A COUNTRY THAT'S BASICALLY RUN BY NORMAN OSBORN.
IT'S HARD TO HAVE A MORAL COMPASS WHEN EVERY DIRECTION IS NORTH.


I SEE YOUR ASSOCIATES ARE RETURNING.

THEN I'LL HAVE TO BE QUICK IF THEY'RE TO FIND YOUR CORPSE WHEN THEY RETURN.
UNHHHH--!

BLAKOW

LAYLA! EVERYONE ELSE IS THROUGH! IT'S YOUR--

UMMMM?

THE GATE COLLAPSED! SOMETHING DISTRACTED SHATTERSTAR!
HE AND LAYLA GOT LEFT BEHIND!
WHO CARES!? WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON THAT FAKE--!
EEEESH...
YEAH.
HIS, UH... WHERE'S HIS HEAD?
UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, IT'S IN LATVERIA.
GUIDO IS CLEARLY FREAKED ABOUT IT.
HE DIDN'T MEAN FOR IT TO GO FLYING THROUGH THE PORTAL. DIDN'T INTEND FOR THE PORTAL TO COLLAPSE, EFFECTIVELY BECOMING A GUILLOTINE.
IT SPOOKS HIM 'CAUSE HE'S ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS.
BUT LAYLA...MY GOD..."THE FIGHT'S COMING TO A HEAD," SHE SAID. THAT WAS LAYLASPEAK. SHE KNEW. HELL, SHE PROBABLY MADE IT HAPPEN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S TURNING INTO.
AND THAT'S BAD.

NEXT ISSUE

VIOLENT
ELECTRIC
RAT
ONE NIGHT ONLY
MUCOUS
MEMBRANE
JULY 6, 1978
STEAM AND MADVILLAIN